

Subject: [Patrin] Activists arrested after Roma eviction

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Activists arrested after Roma eviction

By Fraser Allan

SIXTEEN activists from the Roma Civil Rights Foundation were arrested and detained by police as city council authorities moved in to evict a Roma family which had been squatting in a District VII flat.

The activists were accompanied to the district police station by Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) MP Tibor Szanyi and Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) MP Gábor Iványi. The parliamentary immunity applying to both MPs prevented their arrest along with the others.

Roma Civil Rights Foundation President Aladár Horváth, who visited the flat on Garay utca to represent the evicted family to the press and authorities, said the family was too ashamed of their situation to publicly reveal their identities.

"They will likely move to a new home this week," he told reporters, adding the foundation intended to start legal proceedings against the District VII council and send documentation related to the eviction to Minority Protection Ombudsman Jenő Kaltenbach to determine whether an inquiry into actions of the council or police was warranted.

District VII Mayor Zoltán Szabó defended the action, saying that evictions in the district would have to continue as any other course of action would be a signal to squatters that they would no longer be punished. Szabó added that no evictions would result in any children being left homeless.

Horváth said, "Szabó and his colleagues have made serious legal and social blunders in managing the situation of this family. The district municipality statement is a feeble excuse and only serves to generate more friction and unrest among the poor."

Ferenc Kószeg, President of the human rights monitoring association the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, wrote a letter of objection to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.